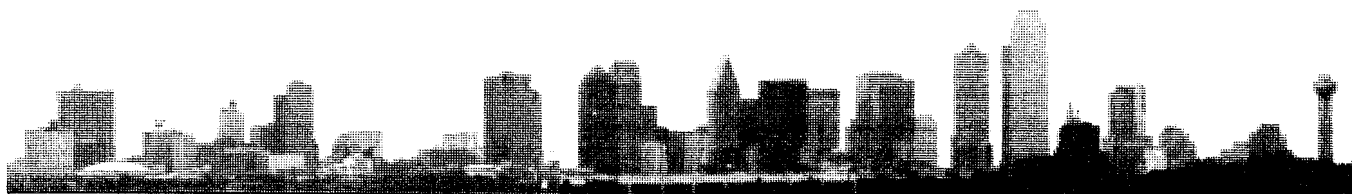


MCCC NEWS

Metroplex Commodore Computer Club



Fort Worth

Volume 11 Issue 6 — June 1993

Dallas

The 68040

my experiences
by Johnny Kitchens

With the introduction of the 4000 a new level of performance was placed into the hands of Amiga users. After a short time its price fell considerably. This prompted me to wonder how long it would be before its low price would affect the price of 68040 accelerators for the other Amigas. The price of many of these accelerators was very close to the 4000's street price, some within a few hundred dollars. Suddenly, one manufacturer, Progressive Peripherals and Software, lowered its prices dramatically (and changed its name to Progressive Peripherals Incorporated). The steep drop in price was also followed by a large layoff in personal and the dropping of its BBS. Also, getting in touch with the company has been much harder. Rumor has it that the staff has dropped to three people. As of the past few months, no ads have appeared for the company in the usual sources for them. All of this has prompted some to say they are going out of business. The people at Progressive have denied it, but it sure looks bad. I decided, based on this, that this shouldn't be so much a review of the Progressive accelerator cards, but of the 040 in general, though I can't help but point out certain things that are part of the Progressive design. With that, let's take a look at the 68040.

It's been just over two years since the 040s first started shipping. In that time many have discovered its awesome power, but few programs have been written to take advantage of it. Even so, its sheer power still amazes anyone when first exposed to it. With the 040, Motorola continued its move to consolidate what had been co-processors into the CPU. This time the math chip has moved aboard, making the 040 the biggest chip available for the Amiga yet. They also increased the size of the on-board caches. The 040 jumps to 8 kilobytes, 4 for data, and 4 for instructions. They have packed an integer processor, floating-point processor, two memory management units, and a bus interface into this chip. All of this works together with extensive pipelines to make

things move in this chip. This setup allows the 040 to process as many as 14 different operations at the same time. Compare that to the fastest 68030 only accomplishing 3 different operations at the same time and you can see the 040's performance advantage. Most Amigas are equipped with a 7.16mhz 68000. Motorola lists its speed at .35 MIPS. If you don't know, MIPS means millions of instructions per second. Compare that speed to the fastest 68030, which runs at 50mhz, or 12 MIPS, and you can see that the original 68000 is surely putting along. The fastest 68040 is the 33mhz version. It's rated at 26 mips. Even though it's running at two-thirds the speed of the top 68030, it's showing over two times the performance. In real-world performance, the 040's performance advantage increases even more. In floating point mathematics, the 040 also shines. The 25mhz 68882 math chip shows about .66 MFlops. MFlops means millions of floating point operations per second. The 50mhz 68882, currently the fastest version of the chip, gets a little over 1 MFlop. The 33mhz 68040 on-board math chip achieves just over 6 MFlops. If you haven't seen the difference between the 040 and other Amiga CPUs, you might have a hard time picturing the boost in performance. I decided I wanted one, but they were just too expensive. Time cured that for me.

Having used GVP 030 accelerators for many years now, I figured when the time came I would move up to a new GVP. Progressive's large drop in price prompted me to buy theirs instead. Recently GVP dropped their price as well, but not by as much. I originally wanted to get the Zeus card which offers a SCSI 2 hard drive interface, but that was not to be. I had decided I wanted a 33 mhz and though a few 28 mhz cards came up, no 33s showed up. Finally, a standard 33mhz card showed up after nearly 2 months of waiting...so I went for it. I was, after all, getting a little desperate as I had previously sold my 50mhz 68030 GVP accelerator card — and living without it was a bit hard. It was quite a relief to finally get it into

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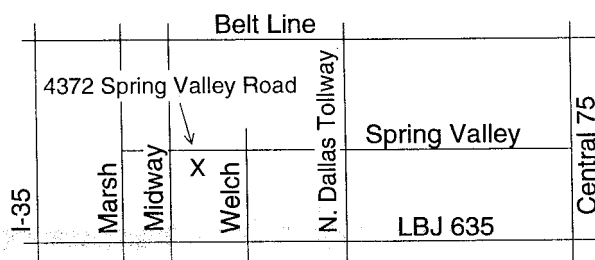
**Win an Amiga 1200 and a GVP
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Attention All Amiga 2000 Owners:

Commodore has announced a new Power-up program! Bring in the cover to your 2000 manual with the serial # of your machine and you can buy a 4000/040/120 for \$2349 or a 4000/030/120 for \$1599 !!!

Toaster Classes

July 10th

Intro to Lightwave

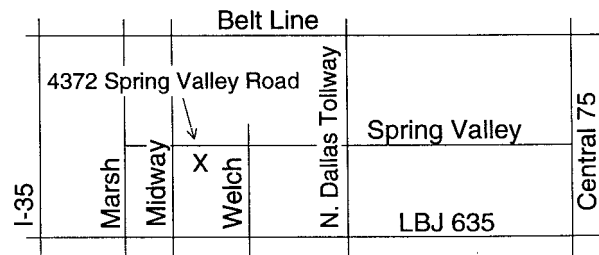
July 24th

Lightwave Modeling

David Johnson, one of Dallas' premier animators, will be teaching a series of Toaster classes. Classes will be in Metropolitan's Multimedia Room on Saturdays from 10-5 with a break for lunch. Cost will be \$125 per session and will include a disk. Class size will be limited to 8 people, so call and make your reservation now!

* * * * *

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my hands, but another problem popped up. I needed memory. The 33mhz 68040 requires fast memory and 60ns was recommended as the speed to get. A quick search revealed a shortage of the proper type of memory. Another week went by before I could get some in my hands. Progressive uses 1 x 8 or 4 x 8 SIMMs for its memory and it has 8 slots for them. This gives it a total capacity of 32 megs of memory, but it only holds 8 if you use the 1 meg SIMMs. You cannot mix SIMM types, so buying 1 meg SIMMs can be a disadvantage later down the road.

Looking over the card, the size of the 040 chip really stands out. It's covered by a fan which controls heat buildup very well as I've found out. Next was the setting of a few jumpers, and I was loaned a 16 bit memory board, which I installed for test purposes. After installing the card, I realized that this was the first time that I had put a slower mhz CPU into the slot. I've had four cards so far, but as I pointed out, this is certainly faster. Installing the card was easy, the real work was the software. Trying to boot up proved to be very hard. The hard drive kept showing errors, and wouldn't finish the boot process. I reformatted the drive and put my backup back onto the drive, still no luck. Fortunately, from past experiences, I keep a disk for the purpose of booting up the system should the hard drive have problems. Such a disk has paid off many times in the past. The disk booted perfectly, but slowly. Finally I was running my 040.

Seeing windows pop open even from floppies were amazing! They appear to jump on the screen as fast as hard drive windows had with the 030. After spending some time enjoying this new speed, I proceeded to get to the bottom of the hard drive problem. Installing the Progressive software was all that was needed. This included two libraries — one to control Progressive's software and the other an updated 68040.library. As it turned out, it was the 68040.library that was causing the hard drive problem. The other software sets the 040 during boot for best operation, a user interface to set 040 parameters, and finally a software switch to choose the boot CPU, which in my machine would be the 68040 or 68000. After that, I tried a hard drive boot and once again I had problems. What I was to discover this time has got to be the biggest compatibility problem of the 040. Its name is Copyback, and it can be a real nuisance. I had to go through the Startup-Sequence and User-Startup and deactivate lines by placing a ";" at the start of each line and rebooting. The process took a while. Running each program from the

Shell revealed that the problem lay with the RunBack program I used. A search finally revealed an alternate called ASyncRun. CopyBack didn't like the other at all. The final cure to my boot problems came with one program I was starting, when I turned off CopyBack before it and back on after it. Using this technique cured several other program problems as well. I used this to make my Shell-Startup run more smoothly. Strangely enough, only two programs out of all the programs I run refuse to run satisfactorily...the previously mentioned RunBack and my favorite Dir command. CopyBack is a new cache mode for the 040 and it does make a difference. 10 to 20 percent of the 040's performance can be lost with the CopyBack turned off, so figuring out how to keep it on as much as possible is very important. After running my machine a while, I can tell when it's off or on. The difference is that noticeable. After experimenting with several programs, including Progressive's own interface, I've noticed that there are many ways to set CopyBack. Each has its own characteristics. I'm not sure of all of the advantages of each, but there appear to be little differences between them in most uses. Strangely enough, certain programs turn off CopyBack upon exiting. The sudden drop in speed usually alerts me to that when it happens. CopyBack should keep things interesting for some time to come.

While trying to get the system up to speed, I noticed the hard drive seemed to be running differently. I have a GVP Series II, and was listed as an acceptable controller that worked well with the accelerator. Running a performance test called RSCP, I noticed it was getting over 900k transfers, but with only 5 percent of the CPU time free. Thinking about all that power in use, I realized that something was wrong. The Series II is the second hard drive controller to be introduced by GVP and it uses true DMA for data transfer. There was the problem. It's trying to DMA to 16bit memory, and it uses the CPU to get the 32bit address on the accelerator card. By limiting the card to the 16bit memory, the performance jumped. It showed 1100k transfers and 83% CPU time free. The performance loss was

not acceptable though. As soon as the 040 accesses the 16bit memory it slows to a crawl. The 68000 looks faster than this, was my thought. So I accepted the slower hard drive performance in exchange for full-speed 040 performance. Finally I could say that I was running acceptably and could move on to using the new performance.

Most of the tests I ran showed I was running 3 to 6 times faster than the 50mhz 68030 GVP card that I was

Comparison Results with AIBB 5.5

	Integer	Graphics	Floating Point
500 w/NFR	22.06	3.14	54.70
2500 w/50mhz 030	1.92	1.01	2.16
3000	3.57	1.34	3.88
4000	1.76	0.58	1.31

Comparison Results with AIBB 6.1

	Integer	Graphics	Floating Point
600	19.22	4.59	42.60
1200	8.20	1.99	20.17
3000	3.26	1.87	4.45
4000	2.13	0.64	1.34

using before. As long as the tests were of the CPU mainly, it was running 20 to 30 percent faster than the 4000. This is mainly a result mhz speed difference between the two. Running the Savage test in *AIBB*, a benchmark program, revealed a weakness in the 040's FPU. The 50mhz 68882 beats the 040. The Savage test uses complicated math operations with transcendental math, which are covered by the 68881 and 68882 math chip, but are left out of the 040...hence the problem. I've read that Motorola is aware of the problem and claims a cure will be forthcoming in the form of a software cure. The onboard math chip could be considered a form of RISC chip, so a software fix certainly promises a boost in performance. Running *AIBB* tests that feature graphics as part of a test shows the speed advantage of the new AGA chipset. If the test used the CPU to calculate the graphics location, then the advantage would be a small margin, but tests using the AGA to do the work would show its advantage every time. Even the 1200's AGA chipset was faster in this type of test. Still, the 040 really moves my machine along. I've included an overall performance comparison from *AIBB* 5.5 and 6.1 for you to examine. These numbers are an overall rating from all of the tests included in *AIBB*. I included both versions as it was the only way to include most of the present models of the Amiga available as well as the 50mhz 68030. As you can see, it moves things along very well. The 040's ability to run so many operations at once makes the Amiga's multitasking work even more efficiently. One example of this, for me, is the clock I run. I set it to a priority of -2. With the 030 it would stop running when I ran most anything else, even downloading files from a BBS. With the 040 it never stops, no matter what I run. I've discovered I could lower the priority on all sorts of things and they still run faster than they did on the 030.

Compatibility is much better than I thought it would be. The previously mentioned files were one problem. I decided to try a few games, and was pleasantly surprised...and baffled. One game booted up in 2 minutes with the 68000, and required over 7 minutes for the 68040. Since the game refused to boot with anything but 1.3, I believed it was that causing the slow-down. Oddly enough, the game itself played fine. Messages that printed on the screen were very slow, but no effect on game play or game speed were observed. The fact that the 040 was working with a game and 1.3 was impressive. Some other games were not so fortunate, but that's the advantage of an accelerated 2000 — you can switch over to the 68000 for that purpose, giving a kind of "best of both worlds" setup.

The future of the Amiga and accelerators all point to even more speed. As programmers optimize their code to take advantage of the 040's abilities, speed increases for existing 040s are assured. Only in the last year or so have I noticed programs optimized to take advantage of the 68030. 40 and 50 mhz 68040s have been rumored and the 68060 promised for next year promises to give as much a jump over the 68040 as the 68040 did over the 68030...maybe more! The custom chips are headed for

even greater performance levels. All of this means the Amiga can keep its lead. The competition hasn't let up though. During the past decade there has been an interesting race between Intel and Motorola. They seem to be racing each other to develop the best CPU. It always appeared to me that Motorola won, but Intel got the market. The 486 vs 040 was no different. The 25mhz 040 blows the 50mhz 486 away, but there are Intel powered machines everywhere. Intel's recent introduction of the Pentium gives them something to holler about, but the 68060 promises to win the fight back. The Intel chip is out now — we'll have to wait for the Motorola to see if the predictions hold true. Picturing an Amiga moving up from a 26 MIPS CPU to 100 MIPS is truly an exciting picture indeed! Figuring out how to make computers run faster appears to be a major part of their future development. It's just a matter of time... ✓

The MCCC 10 Years Ago

The membership had grown to 183, with most of that number attending the single monthly meeting. To try to keep things orderly with the large meeting size, new rules were instituted. A formal meeting schedule was adopted and people were asked to keep their computers turned off until the formal meeting had ended.

The program for June's meeting was "Screen Format and File Processing for Business Applications" presented by Henry Zaehring of Bell Helicopter Textron.

Taylor Computers announced that they were discontinuing all VIC-20 equipment and that they were selling their existing stock for 40% off.

To remind you what prices were like back then...Taylor Computers was offering a Smith-Corona TP-1 with tractor feed (a daisy wheel printer) for just \$475. Easy-Script word processing software was on sale for just \$99.95. Rave was offering the new CBM 8032 computer with 32K RAM and an 11" monochrome monitor for just \$599 — the price did not include a floppy disk drive.

Articles in the 6-page newsletter featured a C-64 wedge to make the F1 key behave as an escape key, and a method to get your Pet 2001 to run C-64 programs. ✓

Amiga Library News

public domain and shareware picks
from Bill Raecke

Sonix Music by Rob Baxter

Rob Baxter has been producing exceptional music for a number of years now. He concentrates on classical and has, so far, worked exclusively in the Sonix format. This month we have three new disks full of these Rob Baxter scores...and all of them are well worth having. One disk contains Gershwin's "Rhapsody In Blue". The other two disks contain Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons". The disks are set up so that you can boot from them and the music will play automatically. I have modified things so that I could install it all on my hard drive...not too difficult if you understand a little about the Amiga. You won't find these on the MCCC series. Look for the disks simply called "Rhapsody in Blue" and "Vivaldi-1" and "Vivaldi-2."

Quality Time by Eric Schwartz

Time for another Eric Schwartz animation. This one is a four floppy set. To run it, you need an Amiga with at least 5 meg of memory. It runs for over 6 minutes. It's another starring Flip the Frog and Clarise the Cat as they try to get a little "quality time" together. As with the other Flip The Frog animations, this one is mildly racy. Check it out. Same as the Rob Baxter music — these are on their own, special disks. Look for them identified with the name of the animation: "Quality Time."

JPEG Pictures

This month we have the addition of some outstanding JPEG pictures. If you have an AGA machine, you should be able to really appreciate these. On MCCC-A_524 is a set of four digitized pics (my favorite is "Birds", which is really a picture of two parrots). In fact, I liked the parrot picture so well that I converted it to HAM. You'll find my conversion on the

same disk so that anyone will be able to view and enjoy it. On MCCC-A_525 is another outstanding picture. It's a picture of a kitten — and it's a real keeper. All the pictures on these two disks are very high quality and well worth adding to your collection.

Workbench Pics

Speaking of converting pictures, this month I have added another collection of four pictures which have been converted so as to be used as Workbench backdrops. As with the other conversions I have done, these are in 16-color 640 x 400 format. Included is a 16 color conversion of the parrot picture mentioned above. (Is anyone getting the idea that I REALLY like this picture?) Anyway, look for them on MCCC-A_524 as well.

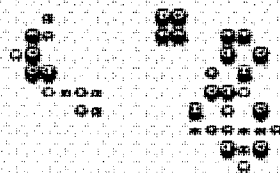
RDPrep and MBRTTest-2 by Microbotics

What?! Commercial products on club disks?! Yep. Microbotics has released *RDPrep* and *MBRTTest-2* for non-commercial distribution. *RDPrep* is a hard drive partitioning utility, not unlike Commodore's *HDDToolBox*. But *RDPrep* is a LOT better looking. And *RDPrep* will work with ANY hard drive controller that fully supports



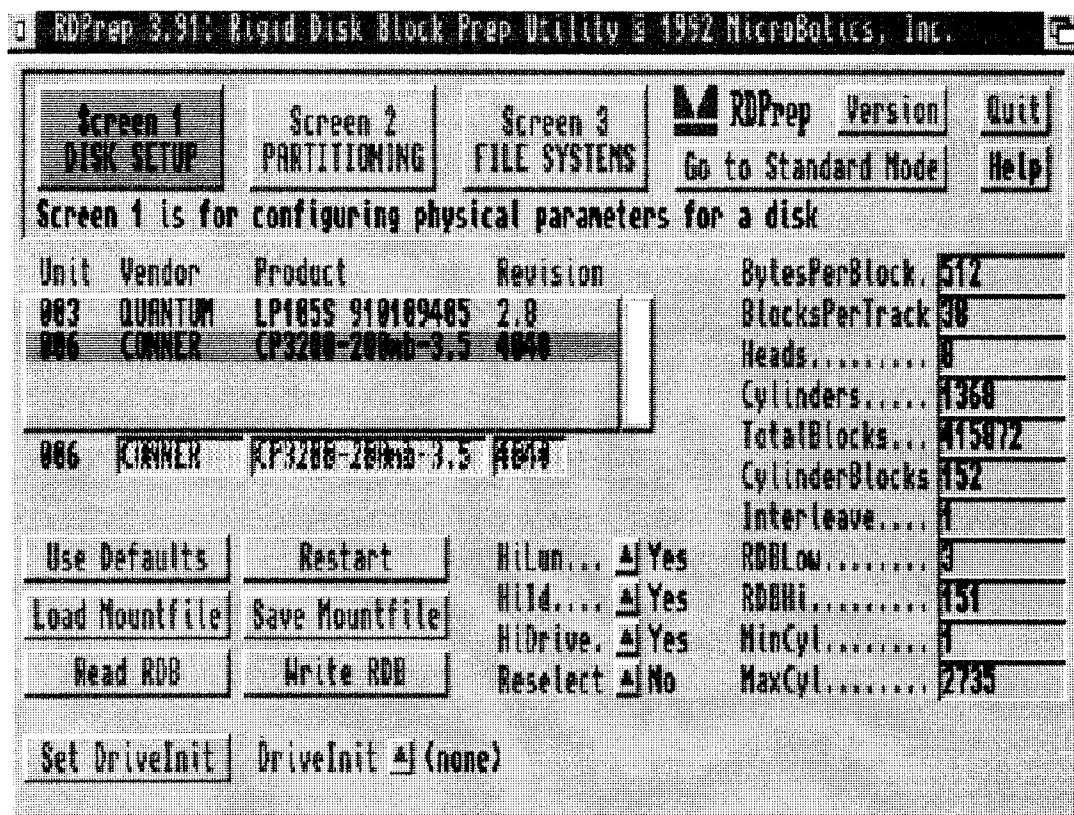
MBRTTest-2 is a memory check utility. It's FAR better than anything we have had available so far. There are six different tests that you can run on your Amiga. The program comes with full Intuition interface so it's easy to use, and it will test ALL of your Amiga's memory...something no other program does. When I say all memory, I mean just that. Even the memory where the program resides is tested. Even the memory used to display the screen you are looking at is tested. *MBRTTest-2* "simply" moves things out of the way momentarily to run the test and then moves them back again. This is powerful stuff. Wondering why you should want to test your memory? Simple answer. You may have some faulty memory and not be aware of it. I know of several people who have had problems with their Amiga crashing on a rather regular basis only to find out that it was their memory causing problems. Amigas don't crash often. Mine crashes far less often than the IBM's we have at work, and I do a lot more with it. When my Amiga crashes, I can be almost certain that it is a memory problem. (I have memory that comes loose on a rather regular basis...especially after I have taken it to a meeting. I simply open it up, reseal the memory, and I'm back in business.) *MBRTTest-2* is on MCCC-A 529.

Laboratory of Life by Accursed Toys



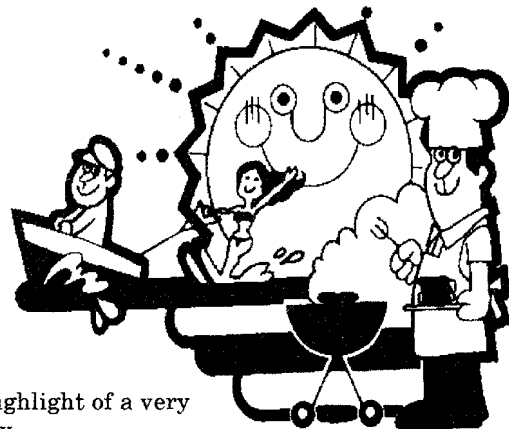
I've never been much of a fan of Life games. They're the kind of thing I look at as briefly as possible to make sure they are distributable on the BBS and through the library and as quickly as possible go on to something interesting. So it came as something of a surprise when I fired up *Laboratory of Life* and actually found myself spending time with it. Maybe it's because of the excellent

music — or the beautiful graphics, with a choice of what the players and playfield look like — or the fact that, in some modes, I was able to interact with the game in progress. Or maybe it's a combination of all of the above factors. Whatever the reason, *Laboratory of Life* is the most successful implementation of Life that I have ever run across. I have added it to my hard drive collection and still play with it on occasion. And I'm looking forward to more titles from Accursed Toys in the future. Look for this one on MCCC-A 529.



THE MCCC BIRTHDAY BASH

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF PETE GOAD



The news was broadcast in the April Newsletter and at the April Meetings. The news was broadcast in the May Newsletter and at the May meetings.

What news I hear you ask?

The MCCC 10th annual Birthday Bash, I reply.

Oh that old thing, I hear you say.

Well, old it now is, and for those of you that missed it, here is a revealing look at how the revellers (in double figures no less) enjoyed a **RAIN FREE** picnic in the Park. Myself and family arrived with the goodies at 11.00 am to find several people trying to start a barbecue. Nothing too difficult with that I hear you say. True, assuming you don't have 40 MPH straight line winds blowing out the matches! Yep, there was a strong wind a blowin'!! Back to the barbecue...three macho, male guys are still trying to get the thing lit, when Harold's wife, Judy, steps up to the grill and with one match has the coals flaming magnificently. Watch three macho guys slink quietly back to the beer keg to drown their sorrows.

We all sat about talking and watching the kids play on the excellent climbing, sliding and swinging equipment. The conversation broken only occasionally by the sounds of scraped knees, arms or hands.

Finally the flames on the coals were out and the cookout began in earnest. The mandatory hot dogs magically appeared on the grill and then rolled precariously toward the edge only to be stopped by the well tended hamburgers brought in by the Williams family. Ned stayed back with his usual feast until the dogs were cleared from the grill. Then with much fanfare, (actually words like "WOW, That must have come from the biggest Bull in the herd") Ned stepped forward with his now legendary T-Bone steak and proceeded to cover well over half the grill!!

With the usual fixings of potato salad, cole slaw, beans, fresh fruit (are your mouths watering yet!!), fresh vegetables and an absolutely marvelous bean dip, everyone settled down to a huge feast.

As we sat and ate our lunch, the clown walked amongst us tying elongated balloons into strange animal shapes for the kids and even stranger shapes for the ladies, all the while collecting names for the big prize giveaway that was

to be the highlight of a very eventful day.

While the lazier of us sat back enjoying a beverage, the more active members set about organizing a sack race and a three legged race for those who felt they needed to lose some calories. Meanwhile, others decided to check out the VolleyBall courts (there were 4 in all, with Caribbean type sand no less!).

The time finally came (about 2.30pm) when the cake was cut and served. Yours truly gave an excellent speech (modesty prevents me from extolling it now). Suffice to say that I wished the MCCC another 10 years of prosperity and information exchange. The cake was a big hit, particularly with the kids who really thought it was somebody's birthday!

After everyone had had their fill of games and cake, several wandered off to the blue cubicles on the other side of the parking lot. All came back in a reasonable length of time. Which is more than can be said of the guy in the pickup. (You had to be there.)

Finally the clown, who by now had gathered all the name slips, proceeded to draw pieces of paper out of a hat. Almost everyone who showed up was able to take home some prize or other and I would like to thank the generous people who donated for their help.

While not everything written down is 100% accurate (the beverage seemed to dull my senses a little), I feel that all those that showed up had a fine time. I would also like to thank everyone that showed up — especially Ned for finding Corsair park — and for everyone involved in making the day a good one.

I was going to mention a poor guy who arrived about the same time as we did in a black pickup. Loaded in the back was a grill, a 50 ft. extension cord and enough food to feed an army. He set up his grill, then unwound the extension cord and started to look for somewhere to plug it in! We could only surmise he had brought with him his electric charcoal starter. After several hours, nobody had joined him...so, forlornly, he got into his pickup, leaving all his stuff set up and drove 45 feet to a blue cubicle across the parking lot. If you want to know what happened next, you will have to ask somebody who was at the picnic. ✓

Blazemonger

review by Dan Barrett (Usenet)

Blazemonger is an extremely fast, highly violent action game. Features include multiple virtual joysticks, 18-dimensional hyperparallax scrolling, 160-decibel digitized sound effects, and live dynamite. **WARNING:** some graphic scenes may be too upsetting for casual users, or even for experienced axe murderers.

AUTHOR/COMPANY INFORMATION

Name: Blazemonger Incorporated
Address: 666 Satan Speedway
Chickenmilk, WI
Phone: (900) EAT-DEATH [\$195.00 per minute]
FAX: Get REAL! Fax machines are for WIMPS.

LIST PRICE

\$9.95 (US dollars). To quote the outside packaging, "REAL software doesn't have to be EXPENSIVE; and with BLAZEMONGER, you PAY FOR IT LATER!! (Heh heh.)" Most stores sell it for full list price because it's so cheap.

HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

Despite the (widely advertised) fact that *Blazemonger* breaks every known rule of "correct" Amiga programming, the game runs properly on all Amiga models under all versions of the operating system. The literature claims that *Blazemonger* can run on other brands of computers, and even on other household appliances, but we didn't test this out.

COPY PROTECTION

This game has the heaviest multi-level copy protection scheme that I've ever seen, even in my dreams! It was obviously devised by a sick mind, and is a little difficult to describe, since I'm still not completely sure what it is. But I'll try.

The master disk has a non-standard format which cannot be read by DiskCopy nor any of the existing hardware or software copiers. Believe me, we tried! My dealer and I used every copying mechanism he had in the store, and all that we accomplished was to melt several disk drives and an Amiga 4000. (He was NOT pleased.)

The next level is a "look up the word in the manual" scheme which, considering the effectiveness of the disk-based protection, seems unnecessary. But the manual lookup is pretty well integrated into the game, and you quickly get used to typing the 255-letter keywords as needed. (The manual, BTW, is the largest I've ever seen for any computer application, let alone a game! It's HUGE! Have you ever seen the complete set of DEC VMS manuals? This is bigger!)

The next level is where things start getting weird. After the game boots from the master floppy (this takes about 0.00001 nanoseconds), you must remove the disk from the drive and — I'm serious here — plug it into the

parallel port! Yes, you plug the DISK into the PORT. In this way, the disk acts as a "dongle" to insure that you can't use the disk in a second Amiga while you are playing on the first.

The remaining 9 or 10 levels of protection get progressively tougher and stranger. Frankly, I don't really know how to describe them. One of them looks like a big, black, sticky, rubber blob that covers the entire monitor, and yet somehow allows the graphics to show through without any interference. Another is a small box of yellow dust (spores, perhaps?) that must be sprinkled around your room before you boot the game for the first time. (This only needs to be done once, unless you move your computer to another room. The company will send you more dust free of charge.) A third mechanism consists of two large iron "walls" or "monoliths" with hundreds of steel spikes sticking out. While you are playing, these monoliths must be standing on both sides of you. Now, they don't appear to DO anything...and they aren't CONNECTED to anything...but still I get the creepy feeling that they are built to SLAM together, with me in the middle, if I try something illegal. Needless to say, I have **not** tried copying the game with these babies installed. (However, the game won't boot without them.)

I know this all sounds pretty strange, but it's not really that inconvenient when you consider how much fun the game is! After a while, you don't even notice the protection any more. Some of my less patient friends have purchased a second Amiga just for running *Blazemonger* so they don't have to do the "protection ritual" all the time.

Just for fun, I gave the program to some of my super-hacker friends to see if they could break the copy protection. Their confident smiles soon turned to frowns of frustration, and then screams of agony, as they attempted to get past the various deadly mechanisms. Nobody was successful, and one of them had to spend a few weeks in a mental hospital! Personally, I think that Blazemonger Incorporated could invent a whole new computer game whose object is to crack this bizarre and twisted puzzle! :-)

REVIEW

After reading about *Blazemonger* for years in comp.sys.amiga.advocacy, I finally decided to check it out! I was surprised at how inexpensive it is! I managed to get the last copy on my dealer's shelf. After doing the whole copy protection ritual, I popped the disk into my A500 and booted up!

Folks, the opening animation is AWESOME. I don't think I've ever seen a more terrifying use of a pair of tweezers anywhere. Even if you never play the game, you **MUST** check out this intro.

Once the game begins, *Blazemonger* quickly takes off. The action is fast and furious as thousands of deadly enemy menaces divebomb you. The game takes place on a series of dungeons and worlds, each one with an unknown number of levels (rumored to be up in the hundreds of thousands). It's unbelievable how much stuff they packed

onto a single disk!

You can make your "hero" character male, female, or one of several thousand different alien races and sexes. The character generator is very sophisticated, and can "roll up" your character entirely automatically (the fastest method), or you can do it manually, or a combination. All the usual features are there: height, weight, strength, intelligence, armor class, hit points, etc. But there are also some unusual ones: blood type, preferred musical instrument, hat size, number of fish, etc., and some of these come in VERY handy in the later levels of play, so choose carefully!! I had to quit my most successful game and start over because I didn't equip my hero with enough bowling balls.

Joystick control is phenomenal. Kudos to the programmers at B. INC. for the incredibly smooth and realistic handling. In fact, I had the eerie feeling several times that the **hero** was controlling the **joystick**, and not the other way around. Weird.

So, how is the gameplay? In a word: **HARD!** This is **not** a game for beginners, or even for intermediate players. This game will give even the most advanced game gods plenty of trouble. Despite several weeks of non-stop playing, I have been unable to raise my score above "3". This is partly because of *Blazemonger's* difficult scoring system which deducts points from your score whenever you mess up, or sometimes even at random (I think — but it's hard to be sure, because there is so much going on). But even if the scoring were different, the playing itself is nearly impossible. I don't want to pat myself on the back, but I finished *Turrican* in 20 minutes, *Shadow of the Beast* in 18 minutes, and *Battle Squadron* in a record-breaking 655 seconds. But *Blazemonger* is in a league by itself — I just can't beat it! I can barely get to the second level!

Even so, the difficult gameplay has not prevented me from enjoying the game. The scenery, when there is any time to look, is beautifully drawn. It looks like every screen was raytraced in 36-bit color and then hand-edited for detail... and at 5000 frames per second, that is a **tremendous** number of screens!!! (How the %*&\$! did they get it ALL ON ONE DISK?!?!?)

DOCUMENTATION

As I said above, *Blazemonger* comes with a gigantic manual. In it, you'll find every piece of information you'll ever want to know about the game (except cheats, of course!). It also includes a history of the game and the company, lists of recommended music to play during the game, maps of many other Amiga games (!), tables of logarithms in several bases, several hundred recipes, the complete Unabridged Oxford English Dictionary (part of the copy protection mechanism), printouts of all source code and documentation from the first 800 Fish Disks, several thousand pages of legal disclaimers, and much, much more. I can't believe that you get so much information when the game itself costs only \$9.95!! The paper itself is worth more than that; I don't understand

how Blazemonger Incorporated makes any money.

BTW, I think it's a little ridiculous that Blazemonger Incorporated recommends that you read the entire manual before playing the game. Realistically speaking, I'd be decomposing in my grave long before I'd even finished the first volume. Hell, I don't even know what is in most of the manual because the freakin' Table Of Contents is slightly longer than an average encyclopedia! Personally, I'd like to see *Blazemonger's* documentation come on CD-ROM, since it's so huge. Building an extra wing onto my house to store the manual was feasible, but only because I work in construction. Some users might not have the patience for this. A ten-meter-high stack of CD-ROM discs would be much more convenient.

LIKES AND DISLIKES

Blazemonger's graphics are the most obviously stunning part of the game. Like the TV ads say: no other Amiga game even comes close. I tried playing *Shadow of the Beast III* after a game of *Blazemonger*, and *SOBIII* looked so pathetic that I tossed it into the trash.

The copy protection is annoying at first, but it's not so bad once you get used to it. (Those monoliths still give me the creeps, though!)

My only real complaint is the packaging does not adequately describe the **EXTREME** level of violence and gore in the game. Although the box is shaped like a plastic explosive wrapped around a lit stick of dynamite, I don't think that's enough of a deterrent for innocent little kids. Also, the screen shots on the box are relatively "tame" compared to most of the game. There is a brief warning on the box, but it says only that the game is "not for the squeamish." I think they should change it to: "not for the squeamish who don't enjoy seeing human heads forcefully pressed through a meat grinder and served to carnivorous, belching slime-beings that looks like piles of flaming tyrannosaurus excrement."

BUGS [Minor spoiler]

I thought I had found a bug on level 3. Every time I pressed the elevator button and the giant spyrochetes jumped out, the game appeared to "freeze", and nothing I did had any effect. A quick call to *Blazemonger* "Customer Service" cleared up the problem — my hero had been breathed on by an invisible ice monster, which froze him (and all of the surrounding countryside!) solidly in place. In later games, I learned how to avoid the ice monster, so the problem went away.

VENDOR SUPPORT

My experiences with *Blazemonger's* "Customer Service" department have been mixed. Although they answered my question (above) with great efficiency, they also claimed that I owed them several hundred dollars in "protection money" for continued support. When I protested, they sent a representative to my home to "discuss" the matter, and this helped me to understand

Amiga or IBM?

the opinions of Denny Atkin
as posted on GENie

Okay, as many of you know, I've recently purchased a PC. (Absolutely NO reflection on the Amiga; it has to do with some non-Amiga Resource responsibilities with my job, as well as the fact that as a journalist I need to keep abreast of the ins and outs of the PC and Mac markets as well). Let me tell you, it's a LOT easier dealing with the Amiga.

Things I've encountered in the last week that make me hate the PC even more than I used to:

(1) No autoconfig. Getting a number of expansion of cards to work together is a nightmare of IRQ and Port settings; conflicts can cause VERY weird things to happen. Figuring the best way to set port addresses is not for the faint of heart, and if you move something (such as a sound card) from its default address, many programs won't find it.

(2) Companies cheapen hardware to remain price-competitive. The joy-stick port on my local-bus IDE multifunction card doesn't support a second stick (necessary for throttle and rudder control); it also can't be disabled. If they can't resolve this, my system has to go back. Over a stupid joystick port. Also, many companies that advertise great deals on local-bus systems include really cheesy video cards with them; even the ones with good video cards only populate them with 512K of RAM, meaning you have to expand the RAM to get more than 256 colors in high resolutions.

(3) Even before you expand it, your machine is a morass of parts from a number of different companies. You're dependent on one company for support for your video card, another for your drive controller, another for the IDE drive of the week... You can buy something like a Zeos with integrated components, but there's no guarantee that Zeos is gonna be around next year.

(4) Even with the fastest local-bus video cards around, PC video speed is a joke. Those who claim that PCs update the screen faster can only substantiate that with simple window movements. Just watch Video for Windows and you'll realize why Microsoft at least had the decency not to give it a name with the word "Quick" in it.

(5) PCs don't support high-speed serial I/O from the factory. If you're not using an internal modem, you have to replace the UART chips to get good, reliable performance with a >2400 bps modem.

(6) You can't get the expert help online that you can with

the Amiga, since chances are that the 5% of the online populace who happen to be whiz-gurus have a vastly different hardware configuration than you do. There ARE advantages to integrated systems.

(7) With the incredible variety of hardware/software configurations out there, there are an incredible variety of potential incompatibilities.

(8) Going to a real OS, such as OS/2 or NT, on the PC isn't really viable due to lack of drivers for devices like CD-ROMs and video cards, and incompatibilities with entertainment and multimedia software. If you're willing to settle for a small smattering of the available hardware and software choices, why not just go for an Amiga in the first place?

I could go on, but I'm getting angry, thinking of ways I'd rather have spent the money... ✓

Blazemonger

from page 10

why regular, monthly payments to the "Customer Service" department were a good idea.

Out of curiosity, I asked the "Customer Service" department why their name is always written inside of double quotes. They said it was for "legal reasons" but would not elaborate. And charged me another ten dollars.

WARRANTY

The disk media and all accessories are warranted for the first two thousand games of *Blazemonger*. This might sound like a lot, but it really isn't, since it's normal to lose several hundred games of *Blazemonger* before you can even plug in the joystick. But everything has worked reliably for me so far.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no other game like *Blazemonger*, and there is no other experience like playing it! I've seen various games that call themselves "Blazemonger-killers" [sic], but none of them compare to the awesome spectacle of the real thing. It's a game that inspires intense loyalty in its fans, too. Even as I lie here in my hospital bed, waiting for the burns and lesions to heal, I am eagerly awaiting my next session with the Ultimate Game. And NEXT time, I'll remember to jump BEFORE the napalm hits the beef stew! ✓

CHAPTER NEWS

Amiga By-The-Loop

Pete Good

The Loop's May meeting was a "fumble/recovery" type meeting due to the main event not turning up! This was unfortunate since there is a lot of interest in high end scanning. The good news is that this demonstration will be re-scheduled, so stay tuned for more information.

Due to the aforementioned unforeseen difficulty, David sped homeward to bring in his machine to demo some new hardware he just acquired. Holding down the fort was the MCCC's own Education ChairPerson Harold Williams. Harold welcomed everybody to the meeting and apologized for the sudden change in plans. He then proceeded to inform everyone present of the upcoming events. Most noticeably the MCCC 10th Anniversary birthday bash. Yours truly explained the whereabouts and also the fact that I had ordered an exceptionally fine and sunny day for the festivities!

Harold then explained about the MCCC to the new members and also revealed this month's shareware donation for the *term* program from Germany. The Q & A session that followed was started with questions concerning the release of *PageStream* V3.0. Many, many more questions followed including Hard drive storage differences, screen and picture formats, AmigaDos 2.04 -> 2.1 upgrades, printer drivers for color printers and finally word processors. This session was almost as long as one of the legislature's filibusters! Sometime during this Q&A session David returned with his machine and set up ready to demonstrate the ATOnce 16MHz 286 PC Emulator. Eventually the questions stopped and David gave a brief demo of the Emulator.

The Loop would like to extend our thanks to Harold for his excellent

stand-in at such short notice and also to David for his presentation on the Vortex ATOnce.

Now, as has become a regular feature?...

WHAT'S THE LOOP DOING NEXT MONTH SECTION?

The next Amiga-By-The-Loop presentation will hopefully be a demonstration and critique of the currently available Word Processors for the AMIGA, so that you can judge for yourselves which program is right for you.

Well, that's it for this month. We hope to see you at our next meeting of Amiga By-The-Loop.

Amiga Central

Johnny Kitchens

May 20, 1993 was a historical day for sure. The last episode of "Cheers" was broadcast. Due to this our meeting drew only 13 people. I guess it's true when they say that there is a majority of people who don't know how to set their VCRs. Oddly enough with so few people present, we ended up having one of the longest question and answer sessions ever. Our first question asked if everyone knew the results of connecting the serial port directly to the parallel port. For those who didn't it was explained. A debate over text editors broke out over the question of the best text editor. No decisive winner emerged, but plenty of options were given. We found out that there is an update for *Word Perfect* for those moving up to 2.0. It's unadvertised and you have to request it.

A long discussion on tape backups followed, discussing the pros and cons of different types. This led to the VCR backup system recently released. Many questions about this system were brought up. Apparently, a painless backup

system has many hard drive owners thinking. It could be a big seller. A question of how to tell what format is used on a disk was asked as well as why does the Amiga use the block size that it does. Some people have noticed that *Directory OPUS* is now slow copying files between disk. It's actually faster to copy from floppy to RAM: back to a floppy. Apparently version 4.03 is a little slow in that area.

Only one rumor was discussed this month. *PageStream 3.0* and how you can get it were discussed as well as the possible release of a CD-ROM from them with a huge amount of fonts on it.

Our main presentation was by Scott Lamb. He gave us a multimedia presentation on CDTV. The title was "Alien Craft". This was an educational setup designed to teach geography. Although it was a test setup designed to show off how such an applications could be done, it was still impressive. I applaud anything to increase education. Scott pointed out that this was a failed project in a way...but it still was a success in showing off the CDTV's abilities. The presentation featured Switzerland, and showed just how complicated this can be for such a small country. I was impressed with it — software as well as hardware. It's a shame that CDTV appears to be fading just as CD-ROMs are beginning to catch on. The age of CD-ROMs is upon us. Their low cost and investment protection for the developer are points that can't be ignored. Fortunately, CDTV may live on in the release of CD-ROM drives for all Amigas from Commodore. Scott pointed out that Commodore plans a release for everyone by the end of the year. We'll need it just for those fonts for *PageStream*. All I can say again is that you should have been there. If you had you would have heard the most amazing information on the 4000's floppy controller, as in WOW !!

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And, for this month, the presentation will be a first hand look at an Epson 24-bit flat-bed scanner. Have something you'd like to have digitized? Bring it to the meeting and, if time permits, you may just get your wish. See you there!

Amiga North Dallas Genny White

Hi, everybody! I promise I'll be in my proper place in the front row next month, as the class I've been attending will be over by then. My sincere thanks to our V.P., Brett Hester, for passing to me all the excitement I had to miss at the May meeting! I understand we were in a huge new room at the Center, as our old spot got snagged by another group when our contract ran out. We're working on other arrangements (big is great, but very expensive), so watch here for news of a new location. Same spot in June, though, as of this writing.

Brett had a lot to share about his trip to the National Association of Broadcasters' convention in Las Vegas. He and 55,000 others saw dozens of Amigas among the high-tech gadgetry, and only a handful of them were NOT A4000s. Early on, Commodore and NewTek announced that they would be working together on new products, marketing, etc. This is certainly great news! NewTek drew a lot of attention, but not all of it was positive. Apparently their marketing strategy focused on putting down the big corporation expensive

stuff and pushing the do-it-yourself operation, i.e. "quit your day job, buy a toaster, and open up your own shop at home" — and their attitude irritated a lot of people. Former Star Trek star Wil Wheaton is now one of their spokespersons, giving me an irresistible urge to mutter "Shut up, Wesley!" Still, says Brett, the newest toaster package is even more incredible than prior releases. He had hoped to show you a Toaster 4000 at the May meeting, but the "beta versions" had just hit dealers two days before, and a presentation just couldn't be arranged that quickly. The new card is shipped to dealers with a 120-meg drive included that is *98% full* with awesome software. (The actual release will likely be a good bit smaller, but still huge.) The package requires at least 10 meg of RAM to run, and 18 is recommended by NewTek (the maximum the motherboard alone will support). Yep, Brett plans to have his Very Own by next month, so watch for an appearance at the June meeting. Much of the other stuff Brett saw at the convention was either "vaporware" or VERY expensive, but he brought home lots of brochures

and stuff. One example of neat stuff/very expensive: a 4-inch-thick 40-inch-display plasma screen with breathtaking color, spotted hanging on the wall. (\$20,000!)

Rumor department: Commodore USA has severely trimmed their personnel, with their employee count reportedly down in the twenties. Among the losses was Henry Ribron's department. As one of Commodore's Product Demonstrators, he had just gotten a lot of equipment and had to send all his toys back to Santa. Very sad.

Our presentations in May were two:

Ken Schmidt shared a new product he had bought: a video tape backup system from Europe. For around \$100, you get a software package and a special cable to connect your own VCR to the serial port on the Amiga. You connect the Amiga's video out composite signal to the VCR with a standard RCA cable, and then the software sends a video signal version of your data to the tape. It comes back in standard RS232 format through the serial port. The interface is pretty good — reminds Brett a little of the "Flashback" backup system, with the

directory "tree structure" displayed so you can find all the directories. The application writes a catalog of the files being dumped at the front of the tape, so you can start the tape, stop the VCR and select the files you want from the displayed catalog, then play the tape and the files come across. You can store around 44 meg on an hour's tape (of course, it takes an hour to write it!). Does "fast forward" work? Don't know, haven't tried it. This sounds

Thought For The Month

Faith is the quality that enables you to eat blackberry jam on a picnic without looking to see whether the seeds move

CHAPTER NEWS

pretty neat, if you ask me, as I don't have the money for a tape backup unit and I don't have the time to do a mass backup to a few hundred floppies occasionally. Thanks, Ken!

Part two: Brett presented his new drawing tablet, "The WIZ", along with the latest release of *Deluxe Paint* (level 4.5). The device sells for around \$200, and comes with a nice configuration utility and a 2-button pen (one on the tip and one on the side). Also available is a "puck" with six buttons, a sort of see-through mouse with crosshairs so you can see EXACTLY where you are on the pad as you move around. You can configure the buttons as you wish — for example, the tip of the pen can be the left, right, or middle mouse-button, or none of the above. The device plugs into a serial port, and may be configured to be ANY serial port (not just the primary port), in case you have a multi-serial card. With his typical enthusiasm, Brett then showed some of the highlights of *DPaint*, including perspective, anti-aliasing and morphing. Anti-aliasing smooths out the jagged edges of curves and angles by easing the color differences along the edge (i.e. if you have a black circle on a white background, the corners will be made a gray tone to

reduce the contrast and make a curve look smooth). I wish I'd seen Brett's "Terminator" morph, gliding an image from a shiny metallic goo-ball to a human face. As time became shorter, the features were presented in a rapid-fire look-fast demo that I bet would fill another meeting by itself some day. Speaking of someday, there are not too many new products out just now, and Brett's looking for ideas for meetings and newsletter articles. Please call him (233-5493) with any suggestions or requests!

NEXT MONTH: (Yes, we DO have a plan!) Be sure not to miss this one, enticingly entitled "DIGITIZING YOUR WORLD"! This will be a very different meeting, with numerous "booths" with Amigas set up around the room, showcasing different digitizing equipment. We'll have a scanner to digitize 2-D images from magazines, photos, etc., a camera to digitize live action, video tapes, etc., and an audio digitizer to capture samples from CDs, cassettes, and even live audio. Bring your own floppies and take stuff home! Quantities per person will be limited, so all can participate in this multi-media extravaganza!

The ever-generous folks at Metropolitan Computer Products donated our May door prizes — good ol' games to lighten our days, which were won by good 'ol people. Look out, I'll be back next month and in the jar for sure. See you there!

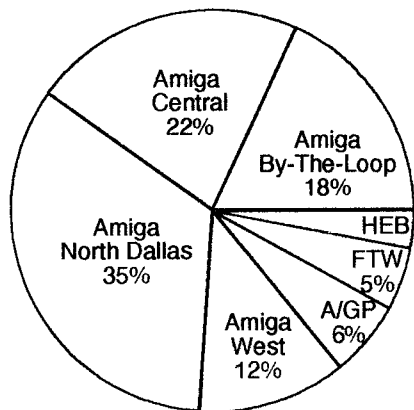
with this device, John.) Packet Radio allows the user to connect what is called a terminal node controller to his or her computer then to a ham radio, thus allowing the user to transmit and receive typed data between other such ham operators in written text which appears on your monitor. There are ham stations all over the country (and all over the world) that you may contact using this package. You are, however, required to have a ham radio license to transmit on packet radio, but not to receive.

John dialed up an area BBS called Tex Net and browsed through various files...such as one which was updating coordinates of the Hubble telescope. With your ham license and packet radio, you could save quite a bit on long distance phone calls or even speak with someone who's an Amiga enthusiast in another country. This was very interesting and something new for this person in particular which I may become involved with in the near future.

Thanks, John. We all learned a lot of new things about ham and what our computers can do besides play *Lemmings* all day.

See you next month at Amiga West, and have an Amiga Day!

MCCC Membership

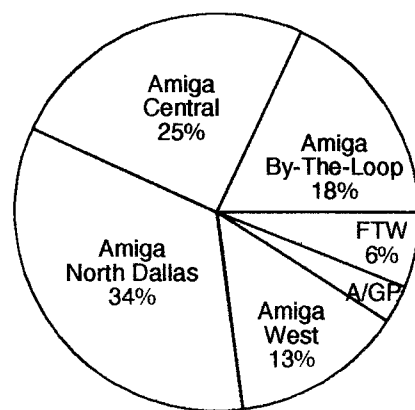


June 1992

Amiga West Ben Clingerman

At the May meeting of Amiga West, our Vice President, John Belyeu, demonstrated the software/hardware package "Packet Radio". (Not "Pocket Radio" as I stated in last month's newsletter. Sorry — I was totally unfamiliar

MCCC Membership



June 1993

The Fine Print

The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club

Statement of Purpose: The Metroplex Commodore Computer Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business.

Legal Stuff: The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Meetings and Membership: Our meetings are open to all. Family membership dues are \$24 per year or \$15 for six months, and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC multi-user Bulletin Board System.

The MCCC News

Copyright Information: Material printed in the MCCC News is not copyrighted unless so noted. Articles may be reprinted or otherwise distributed by other user groups or by individuals who may find it helpful as long as proper credit is given to the author and to the MCCC.

Advertising: The MCCC News accepts two kinds of advertising. Member ads are those which are submitted by a member and which are not of a commercial nature. There is no charge for member ads. Commercial ads are those which advertise multiple like items for sale. Rates for camera-ready commercial ads are as follows for a single month or (prepaid consecutive three months): Full Page — \$36 (\$96); Half Page — \$18 (\$48); Quarter Page — \$12 (\$32); Business Card — \$6 (\$16). Materials to be inserted will cost \$.08 per copy (duplication not included) and must be inserted into all newsletters for the month.

Articles: Members are encouraged to submit articles. Articles may be submitted as ASCII text or in Amiga *excellence!*, *ProWrite*, *WordPerfect* or *Final Copy* format. They may be uploaded to the MCCC BBS, to StarText, or submitted on disk. If these methods are not possible, I will, as a last resort, accept printed articles. If graphics need to be included they may be submitted as IFF files, DR2D, PageStream or Art Expressions structured drawings, Professional Draw clips or, again as a last resort, printed output.

Deadline: The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is 7am of the fourth Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail c/o Bill Raecke, 2614 Charolais Way, Arlington, Texas 76017.

Extra Copies: Extra Copies of the MCCC News are available at \$1 per copy. Orders should be forwarded with the required fee by the regular newsletter deadline.

Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Saturday	MCCC Board of Directors
2nd Tuesday	Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
2nd Tuesday	Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
2nd Thursday	Amiga West Chapter
2nd Saturday	Fort Worth Chapter
2nd Saturday	Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop
3rd Wednesday	Amiga North Dallas Chapter
3rd Thursday	Amiga Central Chapter

SIGS

VidSIG Chuck Johnson 817-478-7313

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Past President	Ray Howard	214-660-4819

MCCC BBS Numbers

(METRO @ 14,400 BAUD)	817-268-4191
(METRO @ 14,400 BAUD)	817-268-4196

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 5 MCCC Board of Directors
10:00 am — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

June 8 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — N.Richland Hills Community Center
Loop 820 at Rufe Snow, N.Richland Hills

June 8 Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
6:30 pm — Grand Prairie Public Library
Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

June 10 Amiga West Chapter
7:30 pm — Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine
Lancaster & Camp Bowie, Fort Worth

June 12 Fort Worth Chapter
1:30 pm — Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine
Lancaster & Camp Bowie, Fort Worth

June 16 Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — Richardson Civic Center
411 West Arapaho, Richardson

June 17 Amiga Central Chapter
7:30 pm — Arlington Community Center
2800 S. Center, Arlington

June 19 Amiga Beginner Class
10:00 am — Metropolitan Computer Products
4372 Spring Valley, Dallas

July Newsletter Deadline — 7am, June 26

These Dealers offer discounts to MCCC members
Be sure to show your membership card

Action Computer

C64, C128, Amiga Repair
244 Webb's Chapel Village
Dallas, Texas 75229
(214) 484-7838

ANSOFT Data Systems

Amiga Software & Hardware
2801 W. 7th Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76107
(817) 870-2529

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